

Creating A Healthy Foodshed: Closing the Gap Between Health, Hunger and Food Production



WSU King County Extension continues its work to create a healthier, more sustainable foodshed for King County. We're taking a systems-based approach to improving food access, nutrition education, sustainable farming, food production, processing and distribution, and community and economic development. We believe to effectively address food security requires strong and mutually beneficial connections among all food system stakeholders. Efforts to create a local food policy council and to improve farm to school connections are taking shape.

The seemingly paradoxical fact that Washington residents are both hungry and obese is a key indication that our community health is in jeopardy. Additional indicators are:

- Food insecurity and hunger rates in Washington are top in the nation.
- Hunger affects children the most.

- Obesity rates have doubled over the last decade.
- 30% of the state's impoverished population live in King County.
- Rates of chronic disease and disabling conditions that are associated with poor diet and lack of exercise continue to escalate year after year.

Unfortunately, these indicators are disproportionately prevalent in low-income communities, particularly low-income communities of color.

Furthermore, farms in the Puget Sound region are among the most endangered agricultural regions in the country. Growers in King County struggle in the context of increasing globalization of the food economy, and local economies are straining, especially in rural areas. Meanwhile, food production is generally so far removed from the people who eat, the eaters, that many no longer have access to fresh, local food, or knowledge of basic nutrition

GOALS:

- Increased understanding of nutrition and healthy eating practices – emphasizing connections to food sources.
- Increased access to healthy foods -- people connected to local food sources are people connected to healthy fresh food.
- Healthier communities -- less hunger, less obesity.

Establishing a Seattle/King County Food Policy Council

Healthy food is a basic human need along with adequate shelter, a safe environment and clean water. Yet, our local governments have no comprehensive local planning process to ensure access to healthy foods for all residents.

No local government jurisdiction has a "Department of Food" and the government programs that address hunger, nutrition, agriculture, and food sector labor conditions are spread across many agencies and jurisdictions. Establishing a food policy council (FPC) offers a way for us to be more effective by capturing the synergy of working together with a common local food systems planning approach.

A Seattle/King County Food Policy Council will provide a role for city and county governments, in partnership with

private sector (for- and non-profit) organizations, to play in decreasing food insecurity, improving health, and increasing the sustainability of our food system. Such a public-private partnership will undertake a

comprehensive food system assessment in order to identify priority areas for developing policy and program recommendations, educating and engaging the public, leveraging resources for food system improvements, and strengthening linkages among food system components.

WSU KC Extension is providing leadership for establishing a Seattle/King County Food Policy Council:

convening stakeholders, educating policy makers, drafting a proposal, etc. At the end of 2004 the steering committee to

It is time to take a coordinated approach to creating policies that will ensure all our citizens have healthy food to eat and that the supply sufficiently meets the needs of our community.

-- Ron Sims,
King County Executive

WSU King County Extension Food System Activities

establish the FPC had developed objectives, plan and timeline to establish a Seattle/King County Food Policy Council by 2006.

Outputs:

- The steering committee has held 5 planning meetings since the beginning of 2005 and created a logic model to guide the process for establishing the food policy council.
- A number of stakeholders together generated a list of potential food system projects to be addressed or catalyzed by the FPC once it is established. This list represents a range of project ideas from simple and no cost to more extensive projects that would require funding.
- The committee drafted guidelines for the structure of council once it is established. The guidelines suggest the number of members, length of term, preferred representation from the food system, appointment process, committees and guiding principles.
- The endorsement campaign started in late 2004 has resulted in over 50 endorsements from organizations (28) and individuals (24). These endorsements are important for demonstrating community support for creating the council.
- Further, a letter of support from King County Executive, Ron Sims was received and presented on May 13 at the Overweight Prevention Forum in Shoreline, WA.
- Currently, the committee is working on a strategy for seeking endorsement from Mayor Greg Nickels and from Seattle-King County Public Health.

Next steps will include drafting charter documents for both the city and county to approve, obtaining staffing, space,

and a small overhead budget to cover the cost of council coordination, and finally, appointing charter members to the council. At some point a media strategy will be developed to further promote the work of the food policy council.

Farm to School Connections

Serving local fruits and vegetables in cafeterias increases access to fresh foods that hard to obtain when eating away from home. Farm to Cafeteria programs can also increase the amount of fresh foods served in school lunch and breakfast programs. -- Sanger and Zenz, 2004. WSU KC Extension is partnering with area citizens, agencies, and organizations to support and implement farm-to-school connections.

Outputs:

- Farm to School Connections Team Monthly Meetings
- Pike Place Market,

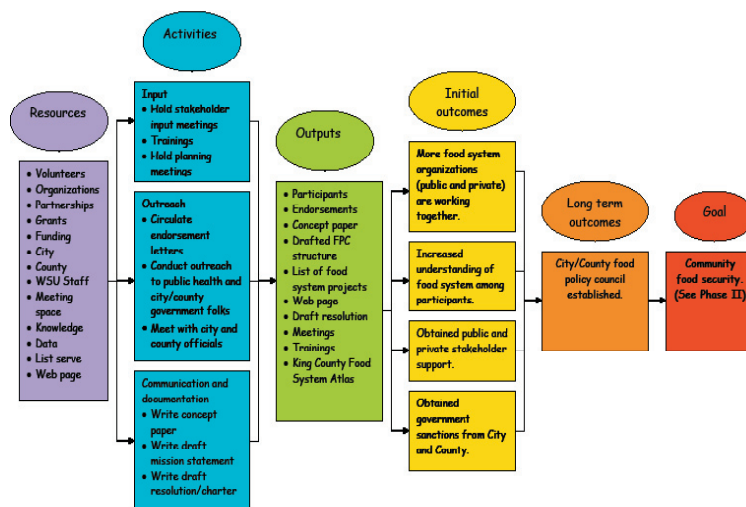
the Highline School District, and WSU KCE were awarded a grant for \$165,000 for the USDA Community Food Project Competitive Grant Program titled, "Farm to School Connections -- Pike Place Market Basket School Food Project." WSU KCE's role will be to conduct education and outreach to support a farm to cafeteria program.

- A Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) panel discussion was held at Spiritridge Elementary in Bellevue, WA in late March to introduce the idea of this type of direct farm purchasing to families in the area.

King County WSU Food \$ense

Cultivating Health and Nutrition through Garden Education (CHANGE) Improving nutrition of low-income residents in schools and housing communities by providing nutrition education based on gardening and cooking.

Food Policy Council Logic Model: Phase I



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